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TO RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI IMMEDIATE 0182
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEAORC/US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 0717
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA IMMEDIATE 4766
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/NRC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 3624
RUETIAA/DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE MD IMMEDIATE 2101
RHMCSUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 5402
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 STATE 032944

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [PARM](#) [PINR](#) [GG](#) [ZJ](#)
SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON CESIUM-137
SOURCE DISCOVERED NEAR KOPITNARI AIRPORT

REF: A. A) TBILISI 000449
[B. B\) TBILISI 000314](#)
[C. C\) TBILISI 000275](#)

Classified By: ISN/WMDT DIRECTOR, ACTING, THOMAS LOWE

[1](#). (U) This is an action request for Embassy Tbilisi.
Please see paragraph 3.

[2](#). (C) BACKGROUND: According to Ref A, the Georgian government has successfully recovered the four cesium-137 sources found near Kopitnari Airport. We are pleased that the Georgians recovered the sources, but are concerned that they did not follow proper procedures when responding to the incident as outlined in the Addendum to the Joint Document of Georgian and U.S. Delegations on Georgia's Priority Needs to Improve Its Capabilities to Combat Nuclear Smuggling. The Addendum (see para 6) obligates Georgia to follow the IAEA Nuclear Security Series, which advises governments to investigate radiation alarms for possible criminal activity and preserve evidence for potential prosecutions. However, a video of the recovery shared with us by the Georgian government suggested that the Georgians were not prepared to consider the possibility of opening a criminal case, since it appeared there was no law enforcement presence during the recovery operation, and no effort to follow proper procedures for the preservation of evidence. Usually when radioactive sources are "abandoned", they are left in their original storage location and forgotten. In this case, it appears several sources were removed from their place of origin and buried in another location. It seems unlikely that this could have been done lawfully. Even if there is not enough evidence to prosecute, it would be helpful to know whether the Georgians even considered the possibility that the abandoned sources were connected with criminal activity.

[3](#). (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Post is requested to congratulate the Government of Georgia on a successful recovery and express Washington's interest in continuing efforts to improve their capabilities to deter, detect, and disrupt nuclear and radioactive material trafficking. In order to clarify information gaps, Washington seeks answers to additional questions (para 4) from appropriate Georgian officials. Post is requested to provide a coordinated response to Washington via front-channel cable.

[4](#). (S//REL GEORGIA) FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS ABOUT SEIZED MATERIAL:

-- Has the Government of Georgia considered pursuing this case as a criminal matter? Has it completely ruled out the

possibility that the material was abandoned by smugglers?

-- Is the road on which the sources were detected a known smuggling route for any other illicit activities, e.g. narcotics or human trafficking?

-- How much confidence does the NRSS have that the material was buried without any intention of transporting it in the future?

-- Is there any record of other cases in Georgia where radioactive or nuclear materials were discovered buried at previously unknown locations?

-- Could the Georgians please elaborate on their explanation that the sources were buried two or three years ago, and why they do not think they will be able to determine their origin?

15. Washington appreciates Post's assistance in answering these questions related to this case.

16. (SBU) ADDENDUM TO THE JOINT DOCUMENT OF GEORGIAN AND U.S. DELEGATIONS ON GEORGIA'S PRIORITY NEEDS TO IMPROVE ITS CAPABILITIES TO COMBAT NUCLEAR SMUGGLING:

On February 2, 2007, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Georgia

STATE 00032944 002 OF 003

John F. Tefft and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Gela Bezhuashvili signed in Tbilisi the Joint Document of U.S. and Georgian Delegations on Georgia's Priority Needs to Improve Its Capabilities to Combat Nuclear Smuggling. Since that time, the Government of Georgia has taken significant steps to address the needs identified in that document and the Government of the United States has secured commitments of assistance from several U.S. and international donors to assist Georgia in implementing those steps. In light of the degradation of Georgia's capabilities to combat nuclear smuggling caused by the events of August 2008, delegations of the Governments of the United States of America and Georgia have agreed to supplement the Joint Document with this Addendum, which specifies additional and revised steps that should be taken to restore and further improve Georgia's capabilities.

PREVENTION

Securing Orphaned and other Dangerous Radioactive Sources

- o Designate a ministry or agency with clear authority for the management of disused radioactive sources.

- o Complete the consolidation of sources that are currently in temporary storage into the new interim storage facility as soon as possible. (Georgian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources; Andronikashvili Institute of Physics; U.S. Department of Energy; U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission).

- o Establish a joint working group between the Customs Control Department at the Revenue Service of the Georgian Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, and the Nuclear and Radiation Safety Service (NRSS) at the Georgian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources to develop procedures for responding to radioactive material detections at the state border. As part of this effort, this working group will define existing needs at the border and present them to the U.S. side for discussion.

DETECTION

Improved Border Security and Capabilities of Law Enforcement Bodies

- o Provide the MOIA, Patrol Police, Border Police, Customs Service, and other agencies with which they interact, reliable, robust, secure, and compatible communications technology and infrastructure.
- o Enhance the capability of the Georgian Coast Guard to monitor Georgia's sea space. This may include:
 - Additional patrol vessels;
 - Portable radiation detection equipment;
 - Communications equipment;
 - Other equipment and infrastructure; and
 - Training.
- o Develop a plan for monitoring of Georgia's green borders with aviation assets.
- o Equip the Patrol Police and other relevant MOIA units with radiation detection equipment and provide appropriate training.
- o Equip the Customs Service with appropriate radiation detection equipment and provide related training.
- o Establish a center to provide centralized repair, maintenance, and calibration service for the radiation detection equipment of all agencies.

RESPONSE

Prosecution and Nuclear Forensics

- o Commit to follow the standards for responding to incidents of illicit trafficking of nuclear and radioactive material contained in the IAEA's Nuclear Security Series Documents and other relevant international guidelines.

STATE 00032944 003 OF 003

Georgia may need additional equipment or training to carry out some of these steps.

- o Develop a written radiological and nuclear response plan to codify implementation of these standards.
- o Conduct regular exercises to ensure the effective implementation of this plan.
- o Participate in the Nuclear Forensic Workshop for the Caucasus region sponsored by the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) and planned for December 2008.

International Cooperation and Information Sharing

- o Participate actively in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. (MFA and other relevant Georgian agencies)
- o Work with the governments of third countries to enhance regional cooperation to facilitate investigation and prosecution of illicit traffickers.

The delegations agreed that the Government of Georgia would continue to work expeditiously to implement those steps in the Joint Document of February 2, 2007, as well as the steps enumerated above, that it is capable of carrying out on its own, and where assistance is needed, the Government of the United States of America would continue to seek to identify sources, within either the U.S. government or the international community, to provide such assistance.

End Cable
CLINTON